

U. V. W. Y.

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From Whom ...

Place ...

Date ...

Departmental
Reference
Numbers

SUBJECT

REPORT BY I. H. BURKILL

ON

GARDENS ADMINISTRATION

1918

Index Reference

Connected
papers

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Minute Paper No.....

Minutes

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MEMORANDUM ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE
BOTANIC GARDENS.

I took over charge on October 17th., 1912, the
Department consisting of:-

i) the Singapore Botanic Gardens, with their excellent
collection of living plants, - as a Botanic Garden
in want of the labelling working up, and as a
park in want of colour. Of its 80 acres about
5 remained undeveloped.

ii) the Economic Garden, Singapore, whereof almost
half remained undeveloped,

iii) the Waterfall Garden Penang, a beautiful
spot suffering somewhat from economies practised
in anticipation of abandoning it in order to make a
reservoir,

iv) the Government House Domain, Singapore,
like the Gardens in need of colour,

v) the Goodwood estate plantation, - several acres
of rubber of some small premises,

vi) the Mount Zion Coconut plantation, - 24 acres
in part under reclamation and in part planted with
very promising coconut palms,

vii) a small library of botanical books, suffering
from being badly housed,

viii) an excellent Malayan herbarium, - in
course of being put into order,

ix) an office in considerable disorder.

On October 17th., 1912, the late Director had been absent from the Colony for nine months during which Mr. Derry, the Curator, had been in charge. Mr Derry had under him Mr. J.W. Anderson, the Assistant Curator. In Penang Mr. Mahomed Haniff was receiving directions chiefly from the Resident Councillor.

2. Mr. Derry had not the scientific knowledge fitting him for full charge, and was also unfit for it for other reasons. Mr. Anderson was in the main left by him in independence, neither controlling. Much went wrong by Mr. Derry's neglect and Mr. Anderson's inexperience, which I need not detail; but which demonstrated the undesirability of leaving the Department in their hands.

3. As I found it, the Department appeared to me to need:-

firstly that there should be two scientific officers so that the Director's leave should not cause a break, and that I could do without a second horticulturist, if I had a scientific assistant,

secondly that upon the European officers too much necessary work was thrown, which work could be done by trained natives of the East: and that, as the Government had said it desired that there would be no European officer in charge of the Waterfall Gardens, Penang, a native must be held in training for relief there,

thirdly that a new building must be provided containing a laboratory and serving to house the office and library. Also that if funds ~~could~~ could be got to build this building of size enough to permit of the accommodation ^{in it} of the herbarium a great gain would be achieved,

fourthly that it had become imperative to erect new cooly huts for the Waterfall Gardens,

fifthly that extra funds must be forthcoming to enable these Gardens to recover from the ^{natural} recession of the Municipality of Georgetown,

sixthly, that when the staff for control ~~had~~ ~~been~~ had been obtained, funds must be asked for to bring the undeveloped parts of the Gardens into development, my plan including (a) the maintenance of observation plots in the undeveloped parts of the Singapore Gardens, (b) the establishment of experiments with food crops in the undeveloped part of the Economic Garden, and (c) the conversion of the hill in the Waterfall Gardens whereon Mr. Curtis once had his house into an arboretum.

4. These needs have been placed before Government in one way or another, but not collectively as now: and I have no reason for thinking that the Government ~~is~~ is in any degree out of sympathy with any of them. But in consequence of the war realisation has fallen very far short of expectation.

5. In the first place the war robbed the Department of the services of the Assistant Director, (Major Chipp) who as a reserve territorial officer was called ~~to the~~ ^{to the} forces after his passage eastward had been taken. In the second place the war determined that the Laboratory-office building for which plans and estimates had been prepared, should not be built. In the third place the war indirectly drew away the Assistant Director, for had it not been for it, his prospects as a rubber planter would not have been adequate. In the fourth place in order loyally to obey ^{Government} ~~the~~ injunction that no avoidable expenditure should be incurred, every act of development which could not be met from the Open Vote of the Gardens, has since 1914 been put off. And now in the fifth place, the local inflation of the prices of tools, and of the cost of labour is so adding to the expenses of running the Department as to ~~indicate~~ ^{indicate} the necessity of financial aid. Lastly an unexpected demand for trained men in India, a consequence of internal development, prevented the Department from acquiring its native assistants at the pay sanctioned.

6. I propose to save the labour of ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~critic~~ ^{critic}, should ^{he} ~~turning~~ ^{translate} to the Colonial Estimates, by tabulating here ~~the~~ ^{the} financial help ~~given~~ ^{given} to the Department from 1913 forward beyond the normal expenditure on upkeep.

For staff, the Department has been granted one Record-Keeper in the Waterfall Gardens (1914 forwards) one additional Inspector of Coconut Trees in

Malacca (1916 for three years), one additional Foreman-Gardener in Singapore vice a Field Assistant (1917 forwards), also in 1914 the services of a planter, Mr. J. J. Bradbery, to tide over difficulties caused by Mr. Anderson's leave, and now the services of Professor G. F. Baker in the absence of both Assistant Director and Assistant Curator.

For special work, the Department has been granted:-
in 1914, ~~£2500~~ ^{\$2500} for the repair of roads in the Singapore Botanic Gardens, ~~about \$300~~ ^{about \$300} for the re-erection of a kiosk ~~MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM~~ and \$2500 for the deepening of the Clay Lake and the filling in of the adjoining swamp: \$925 for general purposes in the Waterfall Gardens, and \$5000 for the coolie lines in Penang.

in 1915 and in 1916 nothing,
in 1917, \$2000 for the repair of the roads in the Botanic Gardens, Singapore, and promises which seem of doubtful fulfilment of \$5000 for ^{and} the Japanese coolie lines, ^{absolutely necessary} \$4000 for the Field Assistants' quarters, and \$600 for alterations to the Assistant Curator's house.

7. The critic ^{then charges from year to year in the} could find ~~some~~ ^{but and then} ~~Estimates:~~ on examination will prove to be adjustments involving deductions from one item equalling the additions to others.

8 Thus has the Department very loyally obeyed the instruction to abstain from unavoidable expenditure.

9. Everyone knows that during the war the prices of tools and other such materials, as well as wages, have gone up. Chankols which I could buy in 1914 at 45 cents each are now only obtainable in Singapore at \$3.75 each: scythe-blades which I could obtain at 95 cents are now \$3: scythe stones which used to cost 14 cents are now 50 cents: and scythe handles which used to cost 85 cents are \$3. The Department has so far faced all these rises without asking for an increased open vote (the Open vote to the Gardens Committee, Singapore, is what it was in 1911 and that to the Waterfall gardens is as it was in 1902). The Gardens Committee, Singapore, has further suffered adversely by having ^(June 4th) to lower the prices of the rubber seed which it sells ~~from \$10 per thousand to \$3.~~ To keep up the revenue then the Committee resorted to an increased production of rubber so that the annual value of that made since ^{the beginning of} 1913 ~~has been~~ has been successively \$1907, 2275, 3763, 3743, and it is being attempted to make it to the value of \$4300 in this year. It has not cost a little effort to achieve a maintenance of the revenue with a superior staff year in and year out reduced ~~from three to two~~ ^{and in this year to one} ~~from three to two~~ In 1914, I was afraid that the revenue could not be maintained and addressed to the Government the letter 6392/14 explaining the situation, to which the answer was "You will have to do without help and should

arrange accordingly. The Committee did so and made more and more rubber. The Committee also sold fruit trees first and then flowering plants extensively to estates, whose power to buy depended again on rubber. It must therefore be recognised that the success of the Committee in meeting its increasing charges without applying for an increased vote has ^{depended} and still depends on the condition of the rubber market.

10 The condition of the rubber market again depends on the war: so that while the war has denied to the Gardens men, and made expenses high, it has helped to bring in revenue. But now there are signs that the expenses are outgrowing the revenue.

11 The Government of the Colony cannot fail to realise that had I asked in June 1916 for a larger open vote for 1917 on the grounds that the cost of labour might rise greatly in the year,

the reply would have been that the expectation *under such circumstances* was insufficiently ~~probable~~ probable. The cost of

labour has risen against a stationary open vote: *for* ~~considering~~ *Singapore*

1st. first the Gardens Committee had to raise the pay

of gardeners by a small amount in order to keep

them: then all the women who could be collected

were employed, - a means by which their husbands

were the better retained: *next* a rice allowance

to the pay was added *making it* about 10 per cent better.

And lastly on the lead of the Government this

rice allowance (now called War allowance) has been

increased so as to make the pay 15 per cent better. By this means trained men up to the maximum number for which married men's quarters could be found have been kept attached; ~~MINIMUM~~ but it has not been possible to retain tappers and mowers against the inducements offered to them upon neighbouring rubber estates, tappers because of their trade, mowers because they are strong young men ~~MINIMUM~~ who seek employment without bringing their wives with them.

increase
12. Fifteen per cent on the money which the Gardens Committee pays out annually in wages means about \$2000; *and this* ~~which~~ is the additional revenue required by the Committee for the year 1912 *for wages*. For the Waterfall Gardens, Penang about \$600 would be 15 per cent of the average wage bill: but as yet the difficulties with labour there have not caused the whole of this increase. ~~MINIMUM~~ But upon a visit which I have now to pay to Penang the pay of the labour force will be enquired into.

13. In the above pages, I have dealt with the finding of money and men. As the Honourable Mr. Darbishire, *who* ~~is~~ *gives publicity to the words* my critic, is always an advocate for the spending of ~~MINIMUM~~ *in the Colony* money, I have put the administrative matter of finding it first. But I hope that it is perfectly clear that it would be wasteful to set to work to spend increased votes without the staff that we need.

14. By the consideration of the Government the

pay offered to Field Assistants has been raised, but the process involved the foregoing of one of the two ^{native} additional officers contemplated, because in order not to ask for more money on giving the rank of Field Assistant to the officer in charge of the Waterfall Gardens, an act of justice, a former gardener was accepted via a Field Assistant.

15. There are of course many sides to administration in a spending Department other than the procuring of funds from the Government's purse. And the critic might question the wisdom of pensioning Mr. Derry at 53, or the handling of the case of Mr.

Anderson, who left the Department one year after obtaining his maximum pay on the ground that the Government would not at once raise it. ^{But} Mr.

Anderson had conceived the idea that the interdiction of an Assistant Director damaged his prospects, and was ~~not~~ ^{not merely for increased emoluments, but for a higher title.}

16 The critic might ask if we pay Foreman-Gardeners and Overseers enough; but as the only two of the first named rank who have left the service since I came ~~without obtaining the maximum pay, 1000~~ both left as a consequence of irregularities, there would seem to be no case. Moreover now the creation of the posts of Field Assistants ~~seems~~ seems to improve their prospects as the most capable might arrive at being one. The initial pay is certainly low; and causes the consideration of every new appointment as a special case.

17. The clerical service in the Gardens might be appropriately considered ^{to be} a part of the Colonial

service, whereas at now the Clerk draws pay as a second class clerk but without pension. I work him to the limit of what I can get out of him, and there remains a great deal of ^{further} clerical work ~~now~~ which I have to do myself. Judged by the Indian standard to which I am used, there is employment for two men; the one as book-keeper the other as correspondence clerk. I have not asked for any change, for not only must salary be provided if a change is made, but additional quarters, - a more considerable request than the Government would care to concede at this time.

18. As to the Gardens buildings, I have recommended a rearrangement of responsibility in regard to them in my letter 4622/16 to which the answer was matters ~~MMMMMMMM~~ are to be left as they are.

~~As~~ they are means that the Gardens Committee has responsibility over some which are dwelling houses and the Public Works Department has responsibility over some which are plant houses. ~~MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM~~

~~and the reverse.~~ I maintain that the Gardens management knows best its requirements in Plant houses; and that the Public Works Department knows best in what a man should dwell. I maintain further that if the Department ^{could have} a defined charge ^{over} ~~for~~ plant houses, there should be a separate fund ^{under} ~~with~~ the Gardens Committees for their maintenance. At the present time the Large Plant House, a Public Works building, has grown very untidy because of the want of allotted funds

to reroof it.

19. The economic condition in Singapore has made the ~~impossible~~ erection of the urgently needed new cooly lines and the erection of the equally necessary Field Assistant's quarters impossible as yet in this year, though the funds were granted.

20. Lastly as to the amovities of the gardens, I have already spoken of the difficulty in retaining mowers, which causes the lawns to be untidy; of the bedding I would say a little. I would say that the colour needed ^(see para 1) has been introduced.

When I arrived in Singapore the beds at the Main gate ^{of the gardens} were filled with Crotons and similar plants ^{having} variegated foliage: nine are the Cannas now occupying them. The creation of a propagating yard in the part of the grounds formerly undeveloped where a Chinese gardener raises flowering plants month by month from English seeds is also nine. The flowering shrubs at Government House gates are also nine, and the cannas in the little dingle under the Colonial Secretary's bungalow and the trees with handsome flowers, still young, which have been planted in various parts of the Government House Domain, and by and bye will give colour. At the same time the nearly completed

Dell of the Singapore Botanic Gardens is nine too.

21 In the Economic Garden the line of a roadway through its arboretum has been laid down in the hope of ultimately making it possible for those

who drive through the Botanic gardens to continue
their drive through the Economic gardens along
a way which will be pretty, and ^{yet} will bring the
economic experiments to their notice. Every one
knows that in this country, if it is desired to
bring anything to the notice of the higher
community, the road to it must be a very easy one.
I want a metalled road through the Economic Garden
whereby visitors will be induced to see its
experimental work.

22. The Arboretum and open have been
re arranged.